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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses issues concerning the formulation of effective child development policies. Discussion focuses on four questions: (1) What are the basic needs of a young child? (2) What are some alternative means of meeting these needs? (3) What are the main obstacles to national implementation? and (4) How can such obstacles be overcome? It is maintained that alternatives to government-financed preschools and day care centers must be used by any country that intends to serve a sizable percentage of its preschool population. An overview argues that any viable alternative approach must begin with the view that healthy development is a product not of a professional, institution-based service, but of a self-reliant, family- or community-based process. Section 2 outlines some approaches to the move from institutional services to family- and community-based programs. Section 3 discusses implementation at the national level, and recommends actions that should be taken if available resources are to be redirected to reach a broad section of the population. (RH)

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# Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Policy Alternatives

*Glen Nimnicht*
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*with*
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# Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Policy Alternatives

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Lydia Hearn

April 1987

**About the authors**

Glen Nimnicht was born and educated in the United States and received an Ed.D. from Stanford University. He has been involved in experimental or innovative programmes in education in one form or another since 1958. He became interested in, and has focused on, programmes for the healthy development of children since 1962 when he opened the New Nursery School for Mexican-American deprived children in Greely, Colorado, USA. He continued with a variety of experimental programmes in the USA until 1974 when he moved to South America. He has continued in the same field there, first in Venezuela and then in Colombia.

Marta Arango was born and educated in Colombia. She later studied in the United States, first at the University of Wisconsin and later at the University of California in Berkeley where she received a Ph.D. in Education. After her graduation she participated in training teachers for head start and follow through programmes. She returned to South America in 1974 and, after 18 months in Venezuela, returned to Colombia with her husband Glen Nimnicht and became a founder and Director of CINDE, the International Centre for Education and Human Development. She is active in programmes for the healthy development of young children, directs a national postgraduate programme in educational research and development, and through her publications, participation in seminars, and public presentations is an advocate of experimental programmes for marginal people.

Lydia Hearn was born in Venezuela and received her initial education in The Netherlands. She later took Development Studies at the University of East Anglia, England during which time she did field work on a World Health Organisation project in Lower Egypt. She attained an M.Sc. in Agricultural Extension and Rural Social Development from the University of Reading which involved a study period at the University of Izmir, Turkey. She worked as a research assistant at the University of Reading and the World Development Movement in London and moved to Colombia to work at CINDE in 1984.

**Occasional Papers**

The Occasional Papers series addresses issues of major importance to policy-makers concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in industrialised and developing societies.

CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Foreword | 1 |
| 1. | An overview | 3 |
| 2. | Alternative programmes | 15 |
| 3. | Forming a national policy | 33 |
| | References | 52 |
| | Addresses | 54 |

# FOREWORD

This paper has been written with the expectation that it will be useful to decision-makers and their assistants in the formulation of programmes for the healthy development of young children. The authors are convinced that alternatives to government financed pre-schools and day care centres must be used if any country is going to serve a sizeable percentage of its pre-school population. We are also convinced that the future welfare of any country depends upon how well it serves the needs of its pre-school population.

As decision-makers are invariably over-burdened with work, we have tried to keep this paper as short as possible, and it has been designed so that readers can grasp the main ideas and then apply to the appropriate organisations for more specific information about a particular programme. The three sections aim to provide an outline of the main issues which should be considered in formulating policies for the healthy development of young children, namely: what are the basic needs of a young child? what are some of the alternative means of achieving these? what are the main obstacles to national implementation? and how can these be overcome?

Whilst the views, ideas and approaches expressed are those which have evolved as a result of the authors' own experiences, this work would not have been possible without the help of a large number of institutions and foundations. The support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation has been of particular importance, and without its constant encouragement and occasional 'needling' we may never have completed it. CINDE's (the International Centre for Education and Human Development) team has also helped in every possible way and particular credit should go to Maria Eugenia Peláez who spent many hours typing and re-typing scripts.

Finally we would like to point out that as authors we can advocate change, we can make recommendations and we can shout about what is needed, but we do not have to take the risks. This book is dedicated therefore to that select group of decision-makers who are prepared to cross the line. By challenging the existing system and traditions they can become the heroes of the children of the future.

The healthy development of young children is crucial to the development of a nation. Nations exist to promote the welfare of their people, but it is the people who produce the power behind the nation. By promoting the welfare of the people, which includes their healthy development from the moment of birth, a country promotes its own growth and strength. This point becomes clearer when we look at what is happening in many parts of the underdeveloped world, where the insidious effects of prolonged malnutrition and untreated sickness can rob the people of much of their mental and physical capacities. The consequences in terms of human weakness and apathy are as significant for the prospects of national development as they are tragic for the destinies of the people involved. People living in such deprived circumstances have shown that, while they can free themselves from imperialism, change their governments, or drive out the landowner who abuses them, they cannot overcome the physical decimation and psychological impairment which takes place when they are young. All the food a child can eat in later life will not compensate for malnourishment when his or her mind and body are being formed. Mental oppression, whether the result of colonialism, national austerity, class exploitation or whatever, is invariably multi-dimensional in its impact, having economic, political, cultural, psychological and intellectual results. Any attempt to overcome or prevent these devastating effects of the malnourishment and psychological impairment of people must necessarily involve an educational process. What this educational process involves and how it can be advanced, is open to much debate. What is clear, though, is that if a country is to tackle these problems effectively it must start with young children; by the age of three the damage may be already irrepairable.

**Future of past strategies**

This paper is written in the light of the drastic failure of past strategies which were aimed at providing for the social well-being of young children. In 1983, 15 million children

died before they reached their fifth birthday because of disease, inadequate diet and poor living conditions. The same number, for the same reasons, will be physically or mentally disabled for the rest of their lives.

It is not just children of poor countries who suffer. In the richer industrialised world, one in 20 children are malnourished while many face neglect and family disruption. Infant mortality rates in some neighbourhoods of the US capital, Washington, are in excess of 150 per 1,000 live births, matching those in some of the poorer Third World countries. In Britain ten years ago, one in 20 children experienced living in a one-parent family; three years ago, it was one in eight; today, in Inner London, it is one child in every three. This can be a traumatic experience and many children are suffering. Too often children who are part of minority groups face deprivation, segregation, and an unwillingness by the majority to take account of their different needs.

Millions of children all over the world are denied the fundamental rights that permit healthy growth and development. It is true that children in one society may be favourably treated when compared with those in another; but all children who are impeded from attaining their full potential within their own system are children in need, whether the reason for their deprivation is socio-cultural, political or economic. Even some of the best efforts have not achieved the desired results. For example, in 1974 the Colombian Government introduced a law which stated that 2 per cent of the payroll of all companies should go to the Colombian National Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) for use in the care of young children. However, the day care centres which have been developed serve only 3 per cent of the population. The picture in other countries may be marginally better or worse, but what it signifies is the total inadequacy, in quantitative terms, of traditional approaches to the healthy development of young children.

**Formal institutions**

Although numerous strategies for attending to the needs of young children have emerged, the dominant idea over the past few decades has been to equate the healthy intellectual development of children with their attendance at a formal institution. Pre-schools, in particular, have been hailed as a panacea, as a method of giving children an intellectual 'head start'. Such schools have been highly valued by the

poor and underprivileged who have associated them with power, privilege and a better education. Governments, too, have taken up the idea that pre-schools provide children with an advantage. In reality, however, these institutions have been over-valued. While it is possibly true that children in developing countries who have been to pre-school have tended to be more successful in later life, their attendance probably has had little to do with this. As pre-schools have generally served the upper classes, there are many other reasons for the children's success: their parents are likely to be better educated and their home environments more healthy and stimulating. Thus the 'head start' has come from the family and home environment rather than from the pre-school.

Day care centres, in contrast, have traditionally been used by children of poorer families. Rarely have they been educational institutions, serving instead mainly as 'dumping places', where parents can leave their children while they work or do something else.

In practice both pre-schools and day care centres are extremely costly: they require an adult for every 15 to 20 children, a classroom, furniture, materials and something for the children to eat and drink. Few countries could ever hope to establish such programmes for the entire population and there is an urgent need to find new and less expensive alternatives to these traditional institutions.

Although much has been said about the cost of education, linking it to the world economic crisis, lack of funds has not been the sole, nor even the primary, cause of failure. The problems have been reinforced by the crisis in the social usefulness of education. Planners and decision-makers have failed to understand the social, economic and political context in which children of deprived areas develop. Instead they have transferred western models of education without taking into account the reality of the environment. Any serious attempt by governments to improve the quality of programmes for the healthy development of young children must involve a closer look at the real needs of these children.

**A new definition**

Could it be that in the past our definition of the healthy development of young children has been inadequate or underdeveloped? We would argue that it has been, because

by focusing on institutions rather than on the real needs of the children, traditional approaches have offered only partial solutions: any viable approach for the healthy development of young children must start with the satisfaction of basic needs, which involves more than mere intellectual development.

What emerges then is the need to understand healthy development as a more holistic concept. A child may know the multiplication tables but this does not necessarily make him or her any more capable of living healthily and happily within his or her community. Intellectual development must be accompanied by psychological and physical growth.

Perhaps one of the first needs of the child, and one frequently ignored, is physical strength. However much intellectual stimulation a child is given, unless this is accompanied by freedom from disease and illness, an adequate diet, and a warm, safe, clean place to live, he or she will not be able to reach his or her full potential in later life. Anything which hinders the child's physical growth in the first three years will retard development in later life. Ensuring a child's physical well-being does not guarantee healthy psychological and intellectual development, but unless the minimum essentials for physical health are present there is no basis for the development of these other elements. Children must be brought up in loving, caring environments if they are to develop into adults capable of tackling some of their persistent problems. Unless children are encouraged to have confidence in their abilities from an early age, they are likely to become adults with a pessimistic outlook on life, who accept their problems as insurmountable or as 'the will of God'.

**Self concept**

This self-concept, or the way a person thinks about him or herself, is formed by thousands of impressions received from other people. By the age of three or four, children have already formed ideas about who they are: am I good-looking, average or ugly? can I do things well or not? do people like or dislike me? As children grow older these ideas are refined and elaborated upon. This emotional need is related to the quantity and quality of the interaction between the child and adults or older children. The most important people who help form this self-concept are the child's mother (or whoever gives primary care), the family,

friends, the neighbourhood, and finally the teacher and the school.

If the mother is emerging from the effects of colonialism or prejudice, or is living in degrading and depriving circumstances, she will probably have a poor self-concept. Unless she is helped to overcome her own deficiencies, it is likely that she will pass on her poor self-concept to her children. The way a parent acts with a child is crucial to the child's emotional development. Consistency in a parent's behaviour is necessary so that the child will understand what is and what is not acceptable, and learn how to predict certain reactions. Moreover it is important that parents show children that it is the behaviour that they object to and not the children themselves. But at the same time there must be a certain amount of flexibility in the relationship and an ability to adapt to varying situations. Children need to interact with more than one adult to learn that not everyone is the same and that throughout life they will be confronted with different types and must act accordingly.

Sufficient interaction with adults of the right kind, as opposed to constant pampering or nagging, is vital to provide children with certain problem-solving abilities and to enable them to understand that both they and their parents have certain limits. If children do not receive this attention, the poor self-concept which is likely to result may be crippling in many ways. It may cause people to fail because they are afraid to try new ideas or take risks or because they may over-estimate what they can do. Identifying problems and finding solutions is an important aspect in the development of a child's self-confidence and his or her ability to recognise limits. In this respect, games and puzzles are not merely to entertain children and to keep them quiet; they perform a crucial role in encouraging children to think critically, to recognise problems and to look for viable solutions. Such critical thinking is of particular importance in later life.

Clearly then, children must live in an environment which stimulates their senses and perceptions; an environment in which there are adults to talk to and to answer questions; which helps them to develop their language ability and to solve their own problems rather than encouraging them to wait for others to solve them. These points are far more

important at this stage than ensuring that the child learns to read and count early and attends pre-school.

The intellectual development of a child is equally related to his or her self-concept. Unless a child has a healthy self-concept he or she is unlikely to explore new ideas, attempt to answer some of his or her own questions, or use creativity and knowledge to accomplish things with the resources of his or her environment. The child's intellectual development will also depend to a great extent on the quality and quantity of his or her interaction with adults or older children.

**Society's expectations**

The fourth basic need of a child is to meet society's expectations. These will vary between societies, but there are two types which a child must meet: to learn to live within the accepted behavioural rules of his or her society, and to learn some specific skills and concepts that are expected at different ages. For example, in the Western World, and those developing countries which have been under the influence of its culture, the child must learn to recognise and name colours and forms, and to distinguish between size by the age of four or five; he or she must count by the age of five or six and read by six or seven. None of these things are necessary for healthy development at those ages, nor do they make a particular contribution to a child's well-being. But, if a child does not learn these things at the expected ages, society will start to reject the child as someone who is not bright and who cannot learn. This, of course, is not necessarily true but society continues to think it is true.

**People-centred**

The healthy development of young children does not, of itself, lead to placing children within a school or institution. The process of attaining a state of total physical, mental and social well-being should be 'people-centred' rather than 'institution-centred' and cannot be achieved by a one-off programme which ends when a child reaches a certain age. This process of child development must be realised within the context of the environment: any change or improvement requires the actions of the whole community. The problem is not simply that countries cannot afford the price of developing children through formal organisations, but also that it is not in the best interests of the children. Any alternative which really meets the needs of children must focus on the family and community as the

environment in which development takes place. As such, if programmes are to provide for these basic needs in an integrated way, they should aim to meet the following criteria:

a. programmes should be implemented using strategies that strengthen the ability of the family, or its substitute, to attend to the needs of the child;
b. programmes should lead to self-help and self-reliance of the family and the community, through their participation and involvement; and
c. programmes should be organised to serve as many children and families as possible within the financial, human and institutional resources of the community and country.

**Strengthening the family**

Families' abilities to attend to the basic needs of the child vary according to the social and political context in which they live. If the family can meet the minimum basic physical needs, then they need time to attend to the emotional and intellectual needs of their children. There are many things that take the time people need for their children, such as when both parents work; when one person must assume the responsibility of both parents; when both parents use their time for other interests; when there are too many children in the family very close together in age; when there is illness in the family; or when the parents must use their time and energy just to provide the basic necessities of life.

Anything in a programme that changes or compensates for these conditions will provide the family with more time but it may be that some parents still will not use the time to attend to the child. One way to encourage the interest of the parents is to develop an attitude among them that it is important to find time for their children and to show them how to use that time productively.

The best programmes to strengthen the family do not provide more assistance than the family needs, and the assistance they do provide strengthens rather than weakens the family. This point becomes clearer when we look at it from the context of national policy. In almost every country there exists a range of programmes for pre-school children varying from extreme cases where the child lives permanently in an institution, to those which help mothers

to care for their children at home. In any country there will always be a need for full day and permanent child care centres, although this need should not exist for more than about 15 per cent of the population. Unfortunately, too much emphasis is being placed on trying to establish such institutions for the majority of the population, with the result that parents are being substituted by a teacher who becomes the main agent in the intellectual development of the child, and this weakens the ability of parents to attend to their children's needs.

**Self-help and self-reliance**

Experience from various countries has shown that even if governments can afford a continuous expansion of the budget to pay for an ever-increasing number of programmes for pre-school children, the success of such programmes depends to a great extent on the family and the community accepting responsibility for them. The same basic idea that applies to the family's ability to attend to the needs of their children applies here. Unless governments find a way to introduce programmes that encourage self-help, self-reliance and cooperation, there is little hope of making much progress in establishing programmes for the healthy development of young children in many parts of the world. The heart of the matter seems to be that when government help arrives, self-help disappears. Time and time again one sees the same pattern. Local people through their own efforts are able to build a pre-school and operate it without assistance. As soon as the government becomes involved, the local support dries up and parents stop attending meetings and being actively involved, because the decision-making power has been transferred to the hands of someone who works for the government. In such cases government help is self-defeating. To be effective therefore, government assistance must come in a way that increases self-help and strengthens the local people's ability to maintain the programme.

**Reaching the population**

Pre-schools developed historically as an extension of the formal school system to meet the educational needs of yet younger children, and as such, they exhibit similar problems to those of conventional programmes. They are expensive because they require a centre or classroom and a teacher, and their services are consequently limited to an elite population. The entrance age is typically delayed until the child is three years old and, for those children in greatest need this age limit is too late. What we see is a

strategy which has concentrated its entire resources on a small sector of the population at the expense of the rest of the people who receive little or no attention. We would like to see these resources spread more thinly over a much broader population, providing the basic needs but leaving the families and communities to take responsibility for the rest.

What we must do is take a step back and reconsider how we can manipulate time, space, materials and human resources to reach the basic needs of our larger population. For instance, how can we expand coverage through local participation in programmes and thereby reduce the need for expensive, highly-qualified personnel for the formal system? How can we use flexible scheduling as a way of enabling greater numbers of both children and parents to participate? How can we reduce the need for costly buildings and where should such 'care' take place? How can we make such programmes relevant to the needs of people in rural areas? And how can we ensure that these programmes start from the birth of the child? These questions serve as the focus of the next section of this paper.

**Passive receipt or active participation**

With the growing awareness of the importance of attending to young children has come a plethora of alternative strategies. Most of these have represented a continuation of past approaches, varying only slightly in their procedure rather than substantially in their ideology. Whether programmes have focused narrowly on the school as an institution, as in pre-school programmes or day care centres, or on a broader range of needs, as in Integrated Rural Development, education invariably has been understood as a one-way process in which children have been expected to respond to the needs of the institutions or of their families, rather than vice versa. Healthy development in the past has been seen as something which can be given to children.

In some instances this 'giving' has come in the form of providing for the child's physical safety, either by 'dumping' the child in a centre where he or she receives a meal and is in a warm dry room for the day, or through the administering of injections to prevent disease. In later childhood an additional element may be added to this package, namely, the provision of knowledge: a commodity

which must be deposited, or 'drilled', into the empty heads of children. While we are not opposed to drilling as such, and recognise the short-term value of encouraging children through the practice of rewarding them, we would argue that education must go beyond the mere absorption of facts. Children should not be viewed as passive receivers of some external development, but must become active participants in their own development. If the healthy development of young children is understood as a self-sustaining process in which individuals become critically aware of their problems and how to solve them, then education must involve a process of participation.

Over the past decade there has been much talk of participation with the result that a host of different definitions have emerged. However, as with any concept which becomes fashionable, this approach has been open to misinterpretation. One romantic, if somewhat misconceived, definition takes the view that people who are under-educated and living in substandard conditions understand their problems and needs fully, and are capable of developing by themselves. Furthermore, it is suggested that outsiders or government decision-makers should not interfere and impose values and solutions on indigenous people who lead very different, and perhaps more natural, lives. Who are they to determine what is a more desirable life style? What this view omits is whether the outsider should willfully withhold information which he believes could improve the lives of other people. Is it not up to the individual to accept or reject this information? To follow this idealistic interpretation of participation could have serious consequences. For example, it would imply that bureaucrats, living in the capital city, who know the relationship between no latrines and bad health, should sit back and wait until people living in marginal areas identify this as their problem, with the risk of allowing the people to suffer or die.

**Top-down versus bottom-up approaches**

A more realistic view has recognised certain limits to indigenous development and understands participation to include a non-formal educational process for the people, so that they can begin to identify and solve their own problems. This approach necessarily involves an outside catalyst, or change agent to stimulate the process. The crucial element, therefore, becomes the way in which this change agent interacts with the people. How directive

should the role of the educator be? What type of intervention is most likely to promote the community's participation and self-reliant development? These are questions which have generated much emotional heat in recent years, leading to lengthy debates on the relative advantages of the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches.

In the past, the top-down strategy has dominated. This approach involves the initiation of projects from the top – by professionals within an institution such as a government ministry or non-governmental organisation – and the consequent imposition of these projects on the masses at the bottom. The role of the change agent in this process is directive with the communication system being one-way: from the agent to the marginal people. The underlying assumption of this approach is that the professionals have the knowledge and resources to develop the local people. Nevertheless, time and time again, this approach has failed to yield the desired results. Invariably programmes have been concocted in the capitals by planners who have not had a clear understanding of peoples' needs, and who have seldom taken the time to find out. Local beneficiaries of the project have often been excluded from the planning and decision-making stages with the result that frequently they have failed to understand or accept the project's aims. Even where planners have taken care to get to know the local situation, we would argue that this 'parachuting' of ideas and resources from the top is inclined to result in project participants becoming financially and psychologically dependent on the inputs provided by the change agent. Consequently the chance of any real grass-roots self-reliance developing would seem unlikely.

Since the mid-1970s the bottom-up strategy has become increasingly favoured. In this approach the agent's role is described as 'non-directive' or interactive, since he or she operates alongside the people, stimulating but not dictating their development. What is argued is that all programmes should involve a process of dialogue, or a two-way process of discussion, in which both the teacher and the learners work together for the solution of relevant problems. The role of the change agent therefore, is to work *with*, rather than *for*, the people. Instead of telling children what they should learn, or 'selling' ideas to them, emphasis should be on encouraging pupils to identify problems and find solutions. Only through this conscious effort to raise critical

awareness, can we enter upon a truly autonomous and self-reliant process for the healthy development of young children.

It has often been argued that non-governmental organisation (NGOs) are the only viable institutions for implementing the bottom-up approach to development. Government bureaucracies discourage local participation. Any large system must establish checks and balances in decision-making to prevent conflicting practices. This tends to push all major decisions to the top, and the higher up they are made, the greater the problem of the bureaucratic bottleneck becomes. Nevertheless, as we will show, governments can initiate non-directive programmes for the healthy development of young children, and some have done so. What is important, therefore, is not who implements the alternative, but *how* that alternative is applied and what are its aims.

**Redefining the concept**

Despite the vast amount of time and money which has been spent on programmes for young children, we would argue that few of these have concentrated on their healthy development. Any viable alternative must begin by redefining the concept, to turn healthy development from a professionalised, institution-based service into a self-reliant family- or community-based process.

As such, this paper concentrates specifically on those alternatives which come to terms with this need. In Section 2, we outline some of the various approaches which have emerged, suggesting how they have handled the problem. These alternatives vary from those which aim to adapt traditional pre-school and day care centres to encourage greater family and community participation, to those which replace these institutions by new and different alternatives.

In Section 3 we turn to the challenge of implementation at the national level, and we recommend a variety of actions which should be taken if available resources are to be redirected to reach a broader section of the population. For us the central problem – and the solution – is people's participation, the creation of which would mark an important step not only towards the healthy development of young children, but towards the healthy development of society as a whole.

From our perspective, any effort to develop the child as a 'whole' and to arrive at some process of self-reliance means either that present institutions must be reformed to encourage greater parental involvement and to attend to the broader needs of the child; or these institutions must be replaced with new alternatives which work directly with the family or community. What both approaches have in common is the participation of the family and commun... The question is how can this participation be achieved? If, as we suggested earlier, participation includes a non-formal educational process which necessarily requires an external change agent, then how can the focus or message of the programme be conveyed to the individuals in a way that results in a self-sustaining process in which individuals understand their problems and how to solve them?

One way in which messages or values can be conveyed is individually, from person to person. This method is effective in ensuring that the message is received but it is an extremely costly approach and we would question its ability to result in community self-reliance or collective action on a significant scale.

A more cost-efficient method is to use mass media, for example, radio, television, manuals, posters or any form of media which reaches a large section of the population. But individuals do not change long-held views and values just because they see something on television that tells them the opposite. Alternatively, they may agree with the message, but not have the resources or know-how to achieve it. Even where the media form is culturally relevant

The programmes described in this section are presented merely as brief examples and the interested reader is advised to write to the appropriate institution cited in the address list at the end of the paper.

and the ideas are clearly presented, individuals remain passive receivers rather than active participants.

**Group strategy**

We would argue that any viable alternative must have the 'group strategy' at its base. What is important in the group approach is not *how* the message is conveyed – it could be by a speaker, an audio-visual display, a game, or even theatre – but that it creates a process of interaction between individuals which distinguishes it as a group rather than as a crowd or a random gathering. The form which this interaction takes depends on whether the group consists of children or of adults.

In groups of young children the interaction is often not very great; children frequently play alone, alongside other children. For example, they may each be playing with their own set of building blocks or painting their own picture, rather than working together. As they grow older the form of interaction changes. Nevertheless, the process of being together helps children to learn how to communicate and understand other people, and the norms and values of their society.

Groups of adults, if properly organised, offer an effective learning environment in which participants can, through discussion, reflect, decide upon, and reinforce ideas. This process raises the confidence of individuals to participate in and determine the course of action: a confidence which they might not have as individuals. Through interaction, participants can identify common interests and problems, but for this to happen, the group must have a clear identity, which requires some degree of internal homogeneity. For example, the group may be composed of mothers from the same neighbourhood, with similar socio-economic backgrounds and children of a certain age group. From our point of view, the crucial factor for determining group composition is 'common interest', since this produces a feeling of solidarity within groups, without which there is little possibility of sustained development.

There are two other attitudes which these groups must acquire if they are to evolve into successful mechanisms for the healthy development of young children. These are organisation and critical awareness. For groups to provide a lasting benefit they must create some form of organisation as a continuing entity. It is not enough for communities to

organise themselves to build a school for example, and then disperse once this aim has been accomplished. Such action would show a lack of critical awareness of the reality of the situation. The school will not run on its own accord and, if the administration is left to some external organisation, it is possible that the school will either close or will lack many of the resources needed for efficient functioning. Unless groups can develop into more formal, legally-based bodies which can ensure the continuation of their actions, it is likely that their efforts will fail, and this will serve only to undermine their confidence and reinforce their belief that they are powerless to change things.

In the final analysis, any viable alternative for the healthy development of young children must involve a degree of community action. No government can afford the cost or manpower to implement or maintain programmes for all the young children in the nation. Thus the introduction of a new alternative requires the creation of a critical mass: a body of motivated people which is large enough to make an impact. Programmes should not concentrate on groups of children alone but, on the contrary, must involve parents.

How can we juggle with the variables of time, space, resources and educational agents in order to arrive at viable alternatives? Whilst all programmes for the healthy development of young children are, by definition, aimed at the child, they may approach this development in different forms. For example, some programmes work directly with the child, others work with the family as the medium for child development, while others attend to the needs of the child within the broader context of community development.

**Institution-based alternatives**

In the past pre-schools and day care centres have been the dominant method of attending to young children. These institution-based programmes have worked directly with the children in isolation from their families and communities. Children have been brought together in centres to meet their physical and intellectual needs.

In terms of our criteria, these conventional programmes have done little to ensure the healthy development of young children. While they may help children to meet some of society's expectations, they can attend to the physical needs of the children solely during school hours, and their

ability to encourage the social and intellectual development of children is questionable. Furthermore, the only way they improve the family's ability to care for their children is by increasing the time parents have to attend to other matters while the children are at school. In other aspects they are counterproductive: they substitute a teacher or baby-sitter for the parent as the prime educator; they are typically run by professionals; and the Ministry of Education makes the decisions, thereby discouraging self-help and self-reliance on the part of the parents.

Nevertheless it would be unrealistic to suggest that all child care centres should be replaced. Pre-schools have a long history and are highly regarded in most societies: to do away with them is politically difficult. As long as women work outside of the home, there will continue to be a need for day care centres for young children. What we must do is to find a way not only to reduce the costs of these programmes, but also to broaden the benefits for the child. This must involve an element of family or community participation, including a parent education dimension. The children remain the main target group, and the parents meet regularly to learn how to attend to some of their children's needs in the home. This may include learning to play educational games with their children, or how to provide a nutritious meal at a lower cost, or how to meet basic health needs, and so forth.

**Non-Formal Pre-School Education Project**

Alternatively, the programme could train local community members to perform the role of the pre-school teachers, as was the case in the Non-Formal Pre-school Education Project* developed in the South West region of the Dominican Republic. In this project community members were trained to become pre-school *promotores* whose role was not only to work with the children, but to encourage parents to contribute time and labour to establish and maintain 'their' services. The project illustrated that expensive buildings are not necessary. Instead, various venues served as pre-school centres: homes of community members, existing community centres, refurbished sheds, or newly constructed thatched enclosures. As parents

* The project was launched in 1979 by the country's government in cooperation with Unicef

became aware of the importance of meeting the various needs of children, and of the family's responsibility in this process, it was possible to encourage their participation. For example, some parents assembled materials needed as teaching aids, others prepared play areas, constructed sanitary facilities and kitchens, or supplied the fuel, utensils and locally available foods required to offer one meal a day to children attending the centre.

This process maintained self-reliance among the communities and, in addition, helped parents to meet many of the needs for the healthy development of their children, while the main focus of the project remained with the teaching of the children within the centres. Specially selected toys and materials were used to develop four areas of study: science, construction, art, and the home. The pre-school *promotores* received annual refresher courses, while project supervisors paid frequent visits to the centres and discussed activities with community members in an effort to sustain the initial burst of enthusiasm which launched the project.

In comparison with pre-schools, day care centres have the additional problem that they have been designed to serve the parents, not the children. Thus an approach is required which turns them into centres which have healthy programmes for children while, at the same time, providing a service to parents. The development of an educational component is imperative to stimulate the intellectual development of young children, while also attending to their physical well-being.

In the past, day care centres have been too large. Overcrowding has meant that they have not been able to provide even the limited service of a safe environment for the child. If these institutions worked through smaller groups they could establish more stable relationships and thereby ensure a greater feeling of security among the children. Smaller numbers may encourage more consistency in the treatment provided by the teacher. Identifying with other children and feeling part of a group helps to develop the child's self-concept. With smaller groups it is easier to use a home or an existing community building. By adding an educational component and by developing smaller facilities for between five and ten children, day care centres could provide more stable and

safe environments for children while continuing to provide a service to their parents.

**La Playa**

One project which has tried to address these problems is the *La Playa* programme organised by the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla, on the Atlantic coast of Colombia. *La Playa* has as its main objective the creation of a good day care programme with an educational component which encourages parental involvement.

The programme has three innovative components: the development of culturally relevant materials for the Spanish-speaking black population; the involvement of parents and the community; and the use of college students from a private university to help train the workers in the day care centres.

*La Playa* demonstrated another innovation in the system. Day care centres in Colombia typically have about 120 children, ranging in age from two to seven years. *La Playa* however, developed an Early Childhood Centre for 30 children in the home of the head teacher. This reduction in size made the centre more manageable, enabled the people to become psychologically closer, and was more economical in operation than the larger centres.

Within the Early Childhood Centre, priority was given to determining how the health and diet of the children could be improved. A guidebook on child care and upbringing was prepared for use by mothers and staff. Manuals on cognitive, linguistic and motor-development were produced by the Centre to describe and illustrate activities suitable for young children. Children's songs and stories were collected for use by mothers both in the centre and at home and the attention of parents was drawn to the importance of the role parents play in the lives of their children.

Another alternative that can change the basic character of day care services is to organise co-operative day care programmes among four or five mothers: the mothers pay one person to stay at home and look after the children, or they rotate this responsibility. This can also be a formal programme organised by a professional who helps the mothers to run the programme, by providing them with professional training and advice. Through this system one

professional can serve several groups of mothers instead of one group of children, as in the conventional programmes.

A similar approach occurs with the parent-operated pre-schools or neighbourhood centres which are usually located in community buildings. The parents are the teachers, provide the space and materials, and make the decisions. One approach to running these centres has been referred to as the 'backyard nursery' concept, in which a few mothers organise a pre-school programme that moves from backyard to backyard, or house to house, with each mother taking responsibility for a day or a week.

**Family-based alternatives**

When we are considering alternatives which replace conventional programmes we must think of different ways to use the teacher, the space, the time and the resources we have available. For instance, if we think of the teacher as a teacher of adults rather than of children, and if parents are seen as the educators of their children, then a variety of alternatives emerge. In these family-based alternatives it is the family rather than the child who becomes the point of entry, since the assumption is that by ensuring a healthy family environment, we can ensure the healthy development of the child.

One problem with conventional programmes has been that children under three are generally not toilet-trained, cannot dress or feed themselves, and cannot be organised into a group. Thus the younger the child, the more difficult and costly is the task of an institution. But as soon as we drop the idea that children must come to centres to be served, we can start programmes for children from a much younger age, and thereby guard against the possible physical and psychological damage to children before they reach the age of three.

**Early stimulation**

One alternative which has been directed specifically towards parents with children younger than three, is the 'early stimulation' approach. The use of the word 'stimulation' is somewhat misleading in this context because the programmes should not push the child to grow faster or to develop more rapidly. On the contrary, the focus should be on attending to the child: meeting physical needs, giving care and attention to ensure healthy emotional development, and playing with the child in a way

that facilitates physical and intellectual development.

A common approach for early stimulation programmes has been weekly or monthly home visits, in which a nurse weighs the child and checks his or her physical growth. Alternatively the mother brings the child to a clinic to be weighed. Occasionally these programmes have included an educational element in which the nurse or instructor disseminates posters, booklets or other materials to illustrate new ideas and to advise parents on a special programme for children who are not progressing at the expected rate. Other programmes have focused more on educating the mothers to observe their baby's growth and to recognise certain phases in their development, so that they can foster or stimulate the next stage of development. Such a system has been attempted by the International Centre for Education and Human Development (CINDE) in Colombia, which has developed a programme based on a series of meetings in which mothers learn to look for obvious steps, or benchmarks, in the development of a child which indicated that the child is ready for certain activities. For example, one benchmark is when a baby grasps an object such as a pencil or a finger and does not want to turn it loose. At this stage you can move the baby's arms gently, and thereby exercise and strengthen the arm and back muscles. The key point in this programme is that the child's development is not related to a certain age. Nowhere in the materials is there a statement that 'at two months, the baby can...' or, 'at one year of age, the baby can...' These statements are misleading because some normal babies can do things at the age of one which other normal babies cannot.

While early stimulation programmes cannot accelerate the development of a young child beyond his or her rate of maturation, they may prevent permanent physical or emotional retardation which occurs among children who are malnourished, deprived of intellectual stimuli, or not receiving care and affection.

**Parent-child programmes**

By the time children reach the age of about three it is possible to do more to stimulate their intellectual development and, as a result, a variety of parent-child programmes have been developed. Some of these have been home visitor programmes, but we believe that the group strategy becomes even more appropriate at this stage

so that parents can come together to reinforce what they have learnt about the development of their children. Parent-child programmes have been designed primarily as alternatives to pre-school programmes and, as such, have aimed to teach mothers how to play the role of pre-school teachers, educating and stimulating their children at home. Only in a few cases have such programmes gone one step further and attempted to help parents solve community problems which indirectly affect children's healthy development. One example is that of the programme developed by CIDE, a private Chilean Foundation. In this programme volunteers from the community were trained to become community leaders, motivating the community to take action.

More commonly, parent-child programmes have shown parents how to stimulate the intellectual development of their children through the use of educational toys and games. These toys may be kept in an educational toy library, or parents might learn to make them from simple local materials. In any event, they are designed to help children learn the concepts which schools value such as distinguishing colours, shapes and sizes – in other words – helping children learn how to learn.

In the process of playing with their children, parents discover how to interact with them in a way that is pleasing and rewarding to both, thereby improving their self-concepts. With time, mothers often become interested in other aspects of their children's development, such as physical health, nutrition and social development, and frequently these topics are added to the programme.

**El Codito Early Childhood Project**

One programme which has developed these other elements is *El Codito* Early Childhood Project, a programme developed by the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN), Bogotá, Colombia, in co-operation with the Bernard van Leer Foundation. This programme uses a series of slides and tapes to train mothers in marginal communities of Bogotá in skills needed for promoting the physical, social and psychological development of their children. The audio-visuals are divided into a number of units, including health, sanitation and clothing, and nutrition. The audio-visuals are followed by discussions, demonstrations and practical activities to reinforce the ideas.

Some developers have viewed parent-child programmes as poor substitutes for conventional pre-schools, suggesting that they were adopted because they were cheaper and did not require classrooms or highly trained personnel. Evidence from the programmes has shown, however, that this observation need not be true. In fact, children in such programmes may learn more than in conventional pre-school programmes. This may seem surprising but there are sound reasons for it. In a pre-school, children receive little individual attention, and learning is more or less limited to school hours. In a parent-child programme, children receive considerable attention and parents can observe closely what their children's problems and needs are.

A well-organised parent-child programme can also have a positive effect on the parents, particularly the mother. The experience of stimulating the intellectual development of her child is likely to encourage her to continue attending the meetings regularly. Through the process of helping her child and experiencing success, the mother is likely to improve her self-concept and confidence. In the final analysis, the real benefit in these programmes is not so much what the child learns, but the development of a healthy interaction between the adult and child which benefits them both.

Despite these benefits, there are a number of weaknesses in the parent-child approach:

1. mothers who work cannot participate in the programme;
2. children do not receive the benefits that a group situation offers such as sharing, establishing relationships and following rules; and,
3. children do not have activities in art, music and physical development.

**Child-to-child programmes**

One way to overcome the first weakness is to send someone else to attend the meetings. For example, community volunteers or mothers who have more time could attend the meetings, then go from home to home passing the message to other mothers. The 'someone else' can be an older brother or sister between the ages of ten and 12. Children of this age can be excellent in this role: they are still young enough to feel part of the household, and have not yet reached the teenage stage which is frequently characterised

by a rejection of family responsibility. At this age they learn easily how to use materials and can explain the activities to their parents. In the process, they learn things which can help them in their future role as parents.

As with parent-child interaction, such a programme is a starting point for other activities. For example, the identification of health problems in the environment and finding solutions to them. Health problems vary depending on whether the children live in rural or urban areas. Problems in rural areas include the lack of safe drinking water, toilets and latrines, and safe systems for the disposal of garbage. In urban areas there are additional problems of finding a clean, safe place for children to play. The approach has been to help each group identify its own problems and try to find solutions which it can carry out by itself or with help from families. The thinking behind this approach has been that the older children need to learn to take ownership of a problem in a similar way to parents in parent-child programmes. They must not wait for 'them' – the community action group, the town, or someone else – to solve the problem. They must first look and see what they can do, second at what the family can do, and third, at what can be done by the neighbourhood.

These child-to-child programmes can form part of the existing schools' programme or can be non-formal, where a teacher meets a number of groups of children from different communities. In each location a volunteer could assist the teacher, so that there is someone in the *barrio* to help the children should problems arise. The volunteers could also make home visits once in a while to keep the parents informed, and to note what progress has been made by the children. An obvious loss in child-to-child programmes is the direct involvement of the parents, and we would therefore recommend that they be used in conjunction with other alternatives.

**The integrated home approach**

Another way of organising the time, space and resources available is illustrated in the integrated home approach. This strategy combines the benefits of a pre-school and a parent-child programme. For example, the children might go to school two mornings a week and the parents attend weekly meetings. At these, parents learn what and how to teach their children, in the same way as in the parent-child programme. In this way, the parents lead the intellectual

development of their children, while the school reinforces it, instead of the other way around. The school develops the children's self-expression, creativity, physical development, art, and ability to play and work in a group; in other words, those aspects that are difficult to accomplish at home with only one or two children.

An example of this type of programme is the Integrated Home-Centre Programme in Sabeneta, Colombia, organised by the International Centre for Education and Human Development (CINDE). The children attend the centre two half days per week, while a member of the family (usually the mother) attends once a week to learn how to play with the children and to stimulate their intellectual development. Initially the programme involved 75 children between three and six years. The Centre consisted of a classroom which was a partially converted patio; a children's play area made of scrap materials, sand and old tyres; a small vegetable garden; rest rooms and water fountains. The staff consisted of one teacher, two assistants, and an occasional volunteer.

The objectives of the programme were:

1. to help the family to provide the basic needs of their children;
2. to improve the family's ability to attend to their children now and in the future;
3. to encourage self-help and self-reliance; and
4. to carry out the programme at a cost which could be sustained.

**Responding to the children**

The classroom was organised as an environment that could respond to the children rather than forcing the children to always respond to the environment. But the teacher and the assistants developed a general plan to use each year. It was made up of 30 units, covering a number of topics and sub-topics, which could be used in a variety of ways and in differing sequences. Using this approach the teacher and assistants could rearrange the programme to respond to the children and still maintain a structure.

Based on this general plan, a plan of action was developed for a short period of time – usually one week. This included:

i general objectives related to the development of the child and the mother's self-concept;
ii specific objectives concerning the topic that the unit aimed to cover; and
iii a short description of possible activities that could be carried out at the centre with the children and mothers, and those that could be followed at home.

The programme for the parents followed the same general plan developed by CINDE for the Parent-Child Programme. It included weekly two-hour meetings and classes on nutrition, home gardens, and other subjects which the mothers found important. There was also the toy library from which the mothers could borrow games and other materials for one week at a time.

**Learning from experience**

During meetings the mothers talked about their individual experiences with their children and with the toys that they had borrowed the previous week. To stimulate discussion, the teacher asked several questions, such as:

Did your child learn a new concept this week?
What games did your child make up? Show us one.
What problems did you have whilst playing with your child?
Who initiated the games, you or your child?
Did any other family members or friends play with you?
What did your child learn?
How did the special activity go?
What special interactions did you have?
Were there any particular problems or difficulties with you or your child during the week?

During these discussions all the mothers were given the opportunity to speak, and those who were timid were encouraged to participate. For example, before the meeting started the teacher might have talked to the person about her experience the previous week, then would invite her to tell the whole group in the meeting.

After discussing the previous week's events, the teacher would introduce a new toy, and tried each week to use a different approach to illustrate the toy in order to maintain the mothers' interest. For example, sometimes the mothers would be asked to form small groups to play with the toy and try to make up games. Then one person from each group would report to the meeting about the game. This

approach proved useful, because while exploring the toy, the mothers found new aspects of it, and their combined effort was an enriching experience for all. Often mothers found games which were appropriate for children of different ages.

As well as using ready-made toys, the mothers also learned how to make toys from resources found in the environment and from scrap materials. Building blocks and cylinders were used as models to make other toys that offer the same learning opportunities. For example, bamboo could be cut into the same lengths as the blocks. Other toys which the mothers developed included jigsaw puzzles, chequerboards and chequers, paper fans designed with letters and different colours, toys that named and indicated parts of the human body, finger puppets and musical instruments.

Using the same concept, mothers were encouraged to develop other activities with their children at home, in an effort to strengthen the child's school activities. For instance, it was suggested that parents could help their children to pick flowers and to classify these by size, texture and shape. The children could then draw the flowers or make flowers out of coloured paper. The children were encouraged to bring what they had made to school to show others.

The meetings ended with refreshments which provided the opportunity for mothers to mix with each other. Every meeting was taped and the tapes were later analysed to evaluate the programme and the progress the mothers were making.

Through the programme, mothers were motivated to improve other aspects of the healthy development of their children, such as their nutrition and health. Over time some of the mothers joined other local and national training courses and health centres and began programmes to improve their local environment.

**Flexible training programme**

The training programme for personnel was fairly flexible. At the beginning the teacher observed the mothers who came to the meetings and it became clear that some had leadership qualities. They were then invited to join the pre-school programme as volunteers. Within a short while, many of the volunteers wanted to become assistants,

working closely with the teacher and having more responsibility. As assistants, they worked with the children every day. They helped to plan activities, participated in evaluation meetings and in weekly feedback meetings with the coordinator. As needs were indicated in these weekly meetings, different themes and subjects were discussed, and the assistants were able to learn about the children's physical and mental development; the creation of a learning atmosphere and its relation to the child's level of development; how to use scrap materials; how to handle groups of children during different activities; and how to work with groups of mothers. They also learned about the formation of self-concept, to work with the community, and to organise activities with complete participation by the mothers.

We have seen that a large variety of family-based programmes exist but their success as alternatives to conventional programmes for the healthy development of young children depends on the extent to which they can motivate families to take individual and collective action for the benefit of their children. Working through the family as the point of entry does not, in itself, constitute a viable alternative. The crucial element of such programmes is that they generate a self-sustaining process of reflection and action, in which the identification of problems and resources and working towards their solution go hand in hand.

**Community-based alternatives**

The alternatives which we have so far described have assumed that the local environment in which the child is developing is either physically safe or that its development is being attended to by some other agency. However, in situations where parents cannot provide a warm dry place for their children to sleep, clean water to drink, or enough food to eat, or where there are no latrines in the community, no means of garbage disposal, and inadequate health services, educational programmes are not enough. It is a waste of time to play educational games with a child who doesn't have a place to sleep or who is hungry and sick. In such situations it would be more logical to begin by improving the local environment. Community-based programmes therefore draw on the local community to take action to improve the environment.

In community-based programmes the importance of group

dynamics becomes particularly pronounced, and collective action is essential to maintain the local environment. Community participation becomes more than simply the involvement of local people as a method of identifying local needs and thereby generating more acceptable technology. Neither is it a system to ensure the redistribution of assets or participation in the benefits of a programme. On the contrary, participation in this instance is the process by which individuals organise themselves, and through their organisation are able to identify their own needs and share in the design, implementation and evaluation of the participatory action.

**Size and structure of groups**

Two factors which help to ensure the active participation of each group member are the size and the structure of the group. Small, local groups are more likely to result in discussion and interaction, while structure empowers groups to take collective action. This structure is not something which can be imposed on people from outside, rather the people themselves should decide on the structure which suits their own particular needs. Group leaders should be people from the community, selected by and responsible to the community.

Group organisation is also essential to co-ordinate activities and to ensure that groups work in an integrated way to meet the needs of children. Where several groups are emerging at the same time to satisfy different priorities and needs, some central structure is necessary to pull them together. It is important that each group should have a clear focus over time so their efforts are not diffused over too great a range: for example, group activities could develop from simple to complex, tangible to intangible, known to unknown.

Community-based programmmes can either emerge spontaneously from within the community, or they may be deliberately activated, for example by a parent-child programme which brings together a group of parents to take action to overcome community problems which indirectly affect the healthy development of their children.

**The role of the change agent**

Spontaneous groups are usually formed for social reasons and membership is often based upon common values and attitudes. Although this approach would appear to be more appropriate to our emphasis on self-reliance and

participation, in practice community initiative cannot be spontaneous in societies where the people are dependent on an external power, or where they accept their plight as insurmountable. Even where activities have been spontaneously initiated, problems have often arisen later in their development. Past experience has shown that there are often limits to indigenous community action, both in terms of their initiation and the later process of group development. For this reason some form of external change agent is essential for community-based programmes.

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the change agent's role can be either directive or non-directive. Regardless of which strategy is adopted, community programmes should aim to be comprehensive, dealing with the child within his or her broad social environment and attending to all the child's basic needs – social, emotional, intellectual and physical.

Comprehensive programmes may take a variety of forms. They may begin with the child as the point of entry, as in the case of Project PROMESA, a community development project located in four communities on the Pacific coast of Colombia. This programme started by stimulating mothers to attend to the healthy intellectual and physical development of their young children, and included cooking and gardening courses together with meetings to encourage parents to operate pre-schools. Only later did it emerge into a broader community development programme to improve the physical environment by building latrines, disposing of garbage, obtaining good drinking water, and cutting and draining swamps. In its final form, the programme included adult education courses in literacy and vocational skills, primary health services, production groups for carpenters, farmers, fishermen, and women making mosquito nets, baskets and mattresses, and a community-wide committee to promote development.

Alternatively, comprehensive programmes may have no direct contact with the children, and their point of entry may be the community. Project SERVOL (Service Volunteered for All), located in the slums of Port of Spain, Trinidad, is an example of this, where initial efforts included improvements in the environment, finding jobs for people, and encouraging small business, and pre-school programmes were established only after some time.

Whichever approach is adopted, its value lies in its ability to mobilise the community and to convert isolated, individual activities into continuing community processes for the improvement of the environment in which young children are developing. This requires individuals to work together to draw lessons from the past, irrespective of whether their experiences have been positive or negative, and use these lessons to stand on their own feet.

In Table I (page 55) we summarise the ideal characteristics of the alternatives discussed in this Section. Grouped into three forms of care – institution-based, family-based and community-based – we set out the objectives and strategies required for each, together with the human and physical needs.

We believe that the healthy development of young children is a crucial part of the development of a nation and we now turn to the issue of implementing programmes on a national scale. Given that most countries could never hope to establish conventional institution-based programmes for their entire pre-school populations, and that such an approach would not satisfy children's basic needs, then where should national priorities lie, and what are some of the positive and negative forces which affect their implementation?

So far we have discussed programmes within the micro-environment of the family, neighbourhood, or community; but programme implementation, particularly national implementation, must also take into account the broader socio-political environment. National policy-makers do not work in a vacuum: on the contrary, they are faced with a number of limitations and options.

The forces which have to be considered may be positive, negative or more or less neutral. The policy-maker cannot change some forces, but it is possible to modify others or, within an understanding of the problems, certain obstacles can be avoided in an effort to increase the probability of success. What is important is that the policy-maker uses the favourable resources and, at the same time, draws lessons from the past to avoid reproducing previous errors. For this reason we shall now turn to some of the considerations which the decision-maker must deliberate.

**Conventional wisdom and tradition**

There is a variety of reasons why programmes for the healthy development of young children have failed in the past, but three common problems have occurred time and time again.

One problem which invariably affects the implementation of a new alternative is tradition. The developing world, and in particular that part which is emerging from colonialism,

carries a load of conventional wisdom and tradition that serves as a major blockage to change. Regardless of how radical the changes in the political system may have been, 'imported' educational systems which maintain and enhance the class structure remain. People still believe that traditional approaches are the most appropriate, that pre-schools are essential for a child's success, and that this has helped the ruling class to succeed.

Resistance to change has come both from government and from the people. National decision-makers have generally been very conservative in their efforts to change pre-school education. They have not been acting out of bad faith, or trying to enhance their positions, or further their careers, or maintain the class structure. On the contrary, most of them genuinely believe that pre-schools and day care centres are an essential part of the education of a child and, as such, are vital for the nation's development.

Furthermore they are the ones who will have to implement the new programme, organise the parents and accept the criticism if the attempt fails.

Parents who have children at conventional centres will also resist change. Even if parents have taken the care to understand the problem, in the final analysis they will want the best for their children, and it is likely that they will not be prepared to experiment with a new approach until it has been widely accepted as an improvement.

**Newness and complexity**

Resistance to change is directly related to the newness of the programme: the more novel the idea the more difficult it will be to implement. For example, an 'integrated home-centre programme' sounds new and strange. The idea that parents become the teachers responsible for the intellecual development of their children, and that the school serves only to reinforce this development, is hard to comprehend at first. If it were described as a pre-school which children attended two half days a week and which mothers attended one afternoon a week to improve their ability to look after the child at home, it would sound more appealing.

Similarly, the simplicity or complexity of the programme's objectives will also affect the ease with which it can be implemented. Clearly, to develop a programme to teach parents how to play with their children and stimulate their

physical and intellectual growth is much simpler than a programme to develop a better environment for the healthy development of young children which includes various programmes to stimulate physical and intellectual development of young children, adult education programmes, the training of local leaders for community development and organisation, the formation of production groups and the use of relevant technology. The complexity of the programme is also related to how the programme is to be managed. For example, a programme which is implemented through one government ministry without the inclusion of others is less complex than programmes which require the cooperation and integration of different services.

Newness and complexity are always negative forces in a programme, and people invariably resist change. To offset these, or to balance their negative effects, the developer or implementer can do three things: develop an information system to increase awareness and understanding of the new programme; develop a training system to assist people at every level of programme implementation; and make certain that the material and support system which is necessary for success is in place. The type of training and support system will be determined by the newness and complexity of the programme.

**Form without substance**

Even when conventional wisdom is overcome, and governments legislate for change, this often remains a change in words rather than in actions. One of the greatest problems in government is that the bureaucracy is not responsive to the politicians. The Ministers and Vice-Ministers may have the power to make decisions but the bureaucracy has the power to decide whether or not to implement the decisions. Unless special efforts are made to facilitate implementation it is unlikely to happen. The politicians will continue to make waves, while the bureaucracy will remain the unmoving deep water below the surface.

The problem of form without substance can be solved by a combination of two things. One is the realisation that form often precedes the substance: it is common that even after mechanisms are designed for the decentralisation of decision-making, the process continues to be centralised. Similarly, a professor can talk about non-formal education before he can be an effective teacher in such a system. The

process of going from understanding something, to being able to practise it, to being able to teach others to practise it, is a slow learning process even if the person is motivated to learn. Once this is understood, it is possible to begin the gradual education and training programmes required to initiate the process. There will always be people who oppose any programmes. If a programme is to succeed, an effort must be made to by-pass, transfer, or retire those who are not going to co-operate.

**Over-reaching**

One of the most common problems which has crippled national programmes in the past has been the over-reaching of the country's capacity to pay. Such a policy has ended in either very limited, token programmes serving the children in greatest need of the services, or conversely programmes that continue to serve the most affluent or powerful in society.

Guyana is a prime example of a country which over-reached. Had a report been written about Guyana's nursery school programme between 1979 and 1980, it would have read like a success story. In 1975 Guyana nationalized all nursery school programmes and promised pre-school education for all children of four years and older. At that time there was one person in the Ministry of Education with a knowledge of pre-school education. By 1980, with the help of Unicef, there were five professionals in the Ministry, and 30 nursery school trainers training some 16,000 teachers. Thus a truly national system had been set up reaching most of the children in the country. Within two years however, the programme was emaciated, the training system was dismantled, teachers were dismissed and class sizes increased. All that remained was the form, the substance had been lost. Why? Because costs were too high. By adding two more years to the educational system the government had increased its costs by almost 20 per cent. Caught in an economic crisis, Guyana was forced to cut costs, and with nursery schools competing against universities for money, the older system with more advocates won and pre-schools were neglected. Had Guyana chosen a less costly alternative, its national programme might have survived the economic crisis.

IC BF's programme in Colombia has also over-reached, although in a somewhat different way. From the start this programme had a secure financial base (2 per cent of the

payroll of every company in the nation) but it has still been unable to meet the cost of a national day care programme, and its services are reaching only 5 per cent of young children. In a sense, those who created the system, with its insistence on full-time care with two snacks and a lunch each day, were the worst enemies of their own programme. By demanding too much, they priced the programme out of the market – no country could afford it.

Kenya and Jamaica have avoided the problem of over-spending. Instead, both countries have developed national training systems which encourage teachers to work in local programmes supported by parents or local government and the national governments have not had to assume the overwhelming burden of operating costs. This has meant that the programmes have been able to pay more attention to other needs which have arisen.

To prevent the problem of over-reaching, decision-makers have to be realistic in their assessment of needs and possibilities. For example, if we examine most developing countries the picture looks something like this:

- More than half the population cannot afford what most experts would consider a minimum diet for good nutrition, and as many as 30 per cent of children are actually suffering from malnutrition.

- More than a third of the population either does not have access to medical or dental care, or has no way to pay for it.

- National infant mortality rates are roughly 130 per 1000, and this figure is much higher in the poorest section of the population.

- Every large city has slum areas where people live without latrines or flush toilets, with open sewers, no running water, unpaved roads and no garbage disposal systems.

- Rural areas suffer from similar problems to those of marginal urban areas, where rats and disease threaten the local population.

- Safe water is a luxury enjoyed only by the middle and upper classes.

**Minimum requirements**

With large and growing foreign debts, it would be suicidal for such countries to introduce new costly models for pre-school education. Given these conditions, what are some reasonable objectives which governments can begin to meet? While we made it clear in Section 1 that the healthy development of young children requires more than the satisfaction of physical needs, the other basic requirements – emotional health, intellectual development, and satisfying society's expectations – cannot be achieved unless certain minimum living standards are met. The very minimal requirements for a child's survival are: a clean place to sleep, safe water to drink, sanitary latrines, and protection against dangerous people, animals and insects. In terms of health and nutrition this also includes vaccinations, low-cost essential drugs to treat common diseases, and primary health care.

If a government is to reach the entire population, no more than these minimal conditions are possible as a first step. Later many things could be added like piped water, electricity, closed sewage systems, but each one of these would increase the cost and reduce the probability of serving the entire population.

When a government can start to meet these absolute minimum conditions to help the family attend to the healthy physical needs of their children, it can afford to think about the psychological needs of the children, their intellectual development and meeting some of society's expectations. Alternatively, if the government could achieve some of these physical needs through encouraging community and family involvement, it may in the process have an effect on the psychological and intellectual development of both the parents and the children.

Faced with such extreme problems and a shortage of money, the cost of a programme becomes crucial to its success, and any national programme must clearly examine the present and future price of its undertaking. For this reason we shall now take a closer look at the costs of various alternatives for pre-school education.

**Comparing the costs**

A decision-maker with a given amount of money to spend is faced with the question of how much the money will buy using the various alternatives. How many day care centres could be set up or how many families could be met in a parent-child programme for instance? Which is the most efficient in terms of meeting the needs of a larger number of children with a set amount of money?

Comparing the costs of the various programmes is extremely difficult: costs vary from country to country and location to location and it is hard to present differences without reference to a specific currency. A detailed cost-benefit analysis of alternative programmes would be both inappropriate and a waste of time, but some form of comparison is necessary because decision-makers are faced with the very real problem of how best to spend their limited resources.

What we will do is take the resources that would go into a day care centre and use them in different programmes providing alternative services. In doing this we refer the reader back to our concept of considering alternative programmes in terms of the various uses of time, space, resources and educational games.

We have chosen a day care centre as a unit of comparison because such services exist in every country and because they are the most expensive kind of service provided for children and their families. We are not, however, implying that day care centres should be traded for something else because they are essential for some families and 'something else' would involve a totally different service. It is like comparing apples, oranges, nuts and fish. Nevertheless, if a decision-maker wants to estimate the comparative cost of other programmes, the cost of a day care centre in his or her country can be used to estimate the relative costs of different programmes.

As our base we will take a day care centre with 30 children who attend eight to nine hours per day, five days a week, every working week of the year. The centre has an adult-child ratio of one to 15 plus one person who cooks lunch and makes snacks. If we take the time, space, resources and people needed for this day care centre and use them in different programmes what will they provide?

With a pre-school, which children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon, the teachers, service workers and facilities can serve twice as many children. Lunch would not be served and children only attend for nine months of the year, so only three quarters of the resources are being used. Consequently, the cost per child of a pre-school would be roughly 40 per cent of the cost of the day care centre or, in other words, the same resources would serve 75 children in a pre-school programme.

An integrated home-centre programme requires that the teacher works with both the children and the parents. The children come two half days a week and the mothers two hours a week. The same teaching staff, a teacher and [illegible]e assistant, could therefore attend two groups of children in the mornings and one group in the afternoons (90 children) and meet with parents the other three afternoons. This means that the resources used in the day care centre will serve 90 children and their parents.

In the parent-child programme the children do not attend a centre and the teaching staff meet with groups of mothers instead. The teaching staff could meet with a different group of 30 mothers each morning and each afternoon for four days a week, leaving one day to make home visits, maintain the library and centre, and plan and keep records. This means that the programme could serve 240 parents (30 parents x 4 mornings a week plus 30 parents x 4 afternoons a week). This figure assumes that parents attend once a week for a year. In the case of early stimulation programmes it may not be necessary for parents to attend once a week and once every two weeks may be adequate. Similarly, it may be that the mother comes weekly for only six months of the year in which case the number of parents served would be 960. The numbers of children involved would be further increased because the mothers can use their new knowledge with all their children, not just the ones in the programme.

If we try to apply the same logic to estimating the cost of a comprehensive programme it breaks down. In talking about the various alternative parent/child programmes we can assume that the same administrative support systems would operate at about the same levels of efficiency, but this does not apply to a comprehensive programme which is more complex and requires more training and support for the

people involved. Going from education to action requires a different ratio of teachers to parents and children plus an additional variety of components: health, pre-school education and adult education for example. These involve expenditure on medicine, building materials, tools, and other requisites but, at the same time, the use of volunteers and existing services would help to reduce the costs.

The best guide that we can give is based upon the experience with PROMESA where we have found that the resources that will serve 30 children in a day care centre will serve about 30 families in a comprehensive programme.

These figures represent only rough approximations and do not include any allowance for volunteer efforts on programmes operated by the community. Obviously, a day care programme operated on a co-operative basis, where mothers take turns in caring for four or five children while the other mothers work, is very different to what we have been describing so far. Nevertheless, the comparisons given can be used as starting points from which to estimate the costs of alternative programmes.

Once the decision-maker has considered past problems, present needs, and the costs of various alternatives, the next task is to establish the resources available for implementing the programme for young children.

**Institutional resources**

One of the greatest resources governments have available to them are the local people and every effort should be made to use them efficiently. It is often thought that the only way of effecting national programmes is through some government ministry, but in practice this need not be true. On the contrary, a large number of different organisations exist, which governments could use in an effort to achieve their objectives. One category consists of governmental or quasi-governmental institutions: those which have been set up by the government and receive some funding from the government, or which receive funding through some private source as a result of government legislation and thereby operate independently. Special interest groups, such as religious groups, growers associations and labour unions, can also provide considerable support, as can other non-governmental organisations that have been formed to experiment, demonstrate and conduct programmes of particular value in areas where special programmes are

necessary. Finally, there are international foundations and aid agencies which can provide some of the technical and financial support required. Each type of organisation has a significant role to play, although each has its faults and virtues.

**Governments**

A government's greatest strengths are its tax base, its national administrative structure and its responsibility to foster the healthy development of its citizens, including young children. Its faults and handicaps centre on its bureaucratic system which resists change of any sort. Typically it is easier to add something new to an existing programme than to change the programme; or it is easier to change a programme than to replace it.

People in a bureaucracy have a tendency to resist any change which may threaten their position. Programmes that cross jurisdictional lines of different ministries are difficult to administer because the professionals feel they 'own' the areas under their jurisdiction. Furthermore it is difficult for governments to adopt programmes to meet local needs when plans are made on a national basis. Lastly, governments are subject to political change, which makes long-term planning difficult. These limitations make it difficult to implement dramatic change on a national scale, and the more complex the changes are, the more difficult they become. Nevertheless, if programmes are to be implemented at the macro-level, it has to be through the government, which is the only institution with the power to nationalise programmes.

**Quasi-governmental agencies**

The quasi-governmental agencies offer an alternative to government for implementing programmes on a national scale. One such example is in Colombia, where the law states that any company with more than 25 employees must belong to one of the quasi-governmental organisations and must pay 2 per cent of their payroll to support it. These organisations are set up to promote the welfare of workers' families and are free to have a variety of programmes and medical services. Some operate stores which sell goods below market price to their members. While such organisations may have a lot of power, they unfortunately by-pass the unemployed and those most in need of such services.

In Colombia, these organisations are valuable because they operate programmes for the benefit of the family; they have a firm financial base to support them; and decisions are made locally. Except for complying with the laws which created them, they are free from government control or politics, and as such they can try a variety of programmes and, due to their competitive nature, frequently do. Their limitations stem from their decentralised structure. Because each local organisation is independent, with local decision-making power, and because there is no central structure through which to co-ordinate policy, the logistics of contracting and working with them on a national programme is difficult. Moreover, unless they are carefully regulated and supervised they can become involved in a diversity of activities, which have questionable value for the welfare of the families.

**Special interest groups**

Special interest groups, such as religious groups, growers associations and unions, also have their independent sources of finance and can be free from political control. This makes decision-making easier, particularly if they are not restricted by tradition and conventional wisdom. Few of these institutions have the healthy development of young children as their main objective but they can finance or operate such programmes. Furthermore, their programmes are often limited to the special interest groups which they represent.

**Non-governmental organisations**

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) vary greatly depending on their specific interest. Those concerned with social welfare programmes can generally be grouped into two categories: those working with community development projects in a particular area, and those with the special purpose of creating and testing different alternatives in order to build models which can be used in other contexts.

As developers of innovative programmes NGOs have several advantages. They are not part of a bureaucratic system with rigid rules nor are they bothered by jurisdictional disputes of professionals, so they can usually make decisions rapidly. Their independence from the formal system means they can be more innovative and radical in their approaches, thereby posing challenging alternatives to the system. All these virtues, however, are also handicaps. As they are not part of the system they find it hard to work with it, and not being



43

part of a large institution they lack the backing and support which such an institution can provide. The very fact that their programmes are innovative and radical means that they come up against more problems in implementing their programmes, and because they pose challenging new alternatives to the system they are often viewed as a threat. Their independent status often prohibits them from receiving funds from foundations and other agencies that would be available if they were a part of the system, and because they are small, non-profit, single-purpose organisations they are at risk of running out of money most of the time.

Thus institutional resources available for the implementation of national programmes are not limited to those of the bureaucratic government ministries. On the contrary, the strength of a programme depends on the extent to which the government can incorporate other institutions and draw on their assets to accomplish appropriate tasks.

**Selecting national policy**

We would argue that governments have a responsibility to set out comprehensive policies to attend to the needs of all pre-school children within their countries. This does not mean that the government implements every part of the programme: the private sector could make a very valuable contribution, and non-governmental agencies could take responsibility for extreme cases, for example, remote rural areas or mentally or physically handicapped children. What it does imply is that the government selects one or more of various alternatives which have been successful on a small scale and broadens these to the national level.

Regardless of which programme a decision-maker selects, broadening it to a national level involves a complex process which often implies profound changes in the system: its existing programmes, the legal base, the objectives, the administration and, in particular, the personnel. When such changes require a model of development or administration different to that in force, the process becomes even more complex and creates contradictions and difficulties for the running of the programme.

Ideally, the broadening and adoption of a programme requires financial and institutional support, the political will to implement it, and a positive attitude towards the

programme on the part of administrators and professionals. If these are present then there will be a sizeable pressure group to promote a change in attitudes, to organise new programmes and services, and to train people for their new functions. With inter-agency co-operation and the participation of local people, the programme's influence will grow.

**Internal and external influences**

In practice, things do not happen as easily as this and we do not live in a perfect society where all forces are positive. The forces which influence a decision-maker in the selection of a programme and their effect on the outcome of the programme, can be categorised into internal and external influences. The internal influences are those related to the characteristics of the programme: the nature and complexity of its objectives, its origins and institutional base, the possibility of its adaptation to fit other contexts, the system of training developed to support the programme, the resources required and the characteristics of the change agent. The external forces are those related to the broader socio-political context in which the project is taking place: the political climate, the attitude of personnel towards the programme, the system's capacity to accomodate the programme's financial and administrative needs, and the present system of administration.

Fortunately though, the decision-maker has a wide range of alternatives which can be orchestrated. The objectives of a programme can be simplified and the training and support materials increased so that these can be implemented by the national government; or a decision can be taken that the programme is too new and complex to start at that level and so it can begin with the semi-governmental or special interest institutions introducing the programme, to demonstrate it and to build a model for use in other locations. Alternatively, the total programme can be designed and then different parts can be implemented through different institutions.

The table on the following pages illustrates a number of variables which a decision-maker may consider in selecting national policy.

**Recommended national programmes**

What programme should a policy-maker select and how can he or she implement it? Throughout this paper we have purposely presented a number of alternatives because we are aware that the political realities of various countries

Table II

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMMES

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. Origin**<br>How was the programme initiated? | - spontaneous response to community needs by the community itself<br>- initiated as part of regional programme<br>- initiated as part of national programme<br>- initiated by a university |
| **2. Institutional Support**<br>What type of support did it have? | - supported entirely by community<br>- supported by non-governmental organisation<br>- supported by university<br>- supported by government agencies<br>- supported by a combination of these |
| **3. Focus of Implementation**<br>What was the focus of the project? | - focused entirely on the children's intellectual development<br>- focused entirely on the children's physical development: their health and the local environment<br>- focused more broadly on the family<br>- focused on the entire community as the environment in which the child develops |
| **4. Personnel**<br>What type of personnel were required? | - within the community:<br>  - professionals<br>  - paid para-professionals<br>  - volunteers<br>- outside:<br>  - professionals<br>  - volunteers |
| **5. Basic Implementation Strategy**<br>How was the programme implemented? | - centrally planned programme in which outsider trains people from the community<br>- locally planned and implemented training programme<br>- a programme which was initiated with one main emphasis and later evolved into a more comprehensive programme<br>- a programme with parallel development in all areas: health, sanitation, cognitive development<br>- community involved at all stages: planning, implementation, evaluation |

| | |
|---|---|
| **6. Coverage**<br>Who benefits from the programme? | - children from middle class or upper class families<br>- children whose mothers do not work full time<br>- children in urban areas<br>- children in rural areas<br>- children in environments which are both physically and emotionally unsafe<br>- children with special problems |
| **7. Type of participation by beneficiaries**<br>To what extent are beneficiaries involved? | - participants are merely recipients<br>- participants receive training to work individually with their children<br>- participants work collectively in all aspects of the process |

make it impossible to fit any single alternative to all situations. We are advocates of change rather than one particular alternative. More pragmatic approaches are required which take into account needs, existing programmes, political commitment and resources.

Nevertheless, if we were the decision-makers in a country with limited resources we know what we would recommend as national policy. We would develop a parent-child programme to serve the entire population which would be directed to helping parents from the birth of their first child until that child reaches the age of six. Beyond this age it would be possible to encourage mothers to reinforce the values of primary school but, because of the high level of illiteracy among adults in several developing countries, it would be unreasonable to expect parents to take total responsibility for their children's intellectual development.

While we believe that such a programme has the promise of achieving the most for the largest number of people at the least cost, there would still be families whom it would not serve. Some parents will not have the time to attend meetings; others will need specific programmes to meet the special needs of their children; some parents will continue to prefer pre-school or day care services; while others may just not be interested. In the latter case we would have to accept, as policy-makers, that there is very little we could do to help these people without considerable investments of time and money and therefore we would have to forget them. For those parents who could not attend the meetings, a child-to-child programme could help to meet these needs, or other people, for example volunteers, could attend meetings for parents and help them in the home. Where, for example, childen are mentally or physically handicapped, parents would need more specific information on methods of working with their child but the basic approach would remain the same: a parent-child programme but with a special content.

**Meeting the needs of the poorest communities**

Special community development programmes should also form a fundamental part of national policy to meet the needs of the poorest urban and rural communities. Governments might wish to encourage quasi-governmental or non-governmental organisations to assume responsibility for this field, and could, for instance, offer tax reductions, match funds or even pay the costs of the programme.

One reason why we recommend that non-governmental organisations should operate community development programmes is that we believe that such programmes should not become part of the permanent administrative structure of government. If it is made clear from the start that control of the programme should be in the hands of the community at the end of a specific period (for example, ten years) and that the institution would receive no funds after this period, then there would be more pressure on the institution to pass control to the community while the government would not be committed to indefinite funding. Additionally, if governments take responsibility for such programmes, this can discourage the local involvement needed for success.

Even if governments do set up an efficient national parent-child programme, and establish local community development projects, there will still be a desire for pre-schools and a need for day care centres. We would argue that these institutions should be private and that governments should control safety standards. Governments should encourage special interest groups, such as labour unions or businesses, to operate day care centres for the children of their members or employees.

We have said that one way to combine a parent-child programme with the beneficial effects of pre-school is to create an integrated home-centre programme, but this would be beyond the resources of many countries. An alternative would be to set up an efficient national system to help mothers to organise and run their own co-operative programmes, backyard nursery schools, or community-run pre-schools. In this way mothers would learn to attend to their young children through the parent-child programme, their children would benefit through both the individual attention and the experience of playing with other children, and mothers would have time to attend to other needs. But governments cannot do this alone and mothers must be made aware of their responsibilities in setting up, for example, co-operative programmes. This would require a well-organised and widely available advisory and training service.

These are recommendations which we as authors would make in general, free from political restraints, without competing programmes and with solid support. Obviously,

in reality there are drastic variations; few countries are in a position to totally restructure their present system, and professional responsibilities for young children may not be best served by rising enthusiastically to every new challenge. However well intentioned such efforts may be, they are often ill-prepared. In the long term it may be more effective for decision-makers to begin with simple programmes which can be met in a responsive and flexible way.

**Specific steps**

Regardless of which alternative a government chooses, there are a number of specific steps which it must follow in order to broaden the objectives to cover the total population:

1. The government should carry out an in-depth study of the various alternatives which exist at the micro-level and determine which aspects can be inserted into national programmes. To make this more effective the study should be carried out in cooperation with non-governmental institutions.

2. An inventory should be made of the needs of government institutions in order to see to what extent other institutions can fulfil them. By using other organisations, a government can keep the administrative structure as simple as possible between the administration and the community and by-pass some of the bureaucracy.

3. Governments should provide financial support for the broadening of such programmes, making financing as flexible as possible, with the ability to respond rapidly to meet programme needs. Too often, money has been available when groups do not have the organisation or structure to use it efficiently, and supplies are exhausted, or take too long to arrive, when they are needed.

4. Efforts should be made to adapt some of the existing programmes for use on television, radio and in print or in programmes for non-formal and distance education.

5. Seminars and meetings between government agencies and private organisations should be arranged to encourage discussion and the sharing of ideas

concerning new alternatives and methods for implementing them.

6. To encourage local participation, governments must create incentives so that communities will take individual actions. For instance, they should decentralise decision making as much as possible, or have local advisors so that the decisions reached reflect local customs and lifestyles.

7. The introduction of any new programme must be accompanied by an evaluation system. This should not be complex: on the contrary, it should involve a simple system to detect problems as they arise so that they can be studied and dealt with.

In this paper we have suggested a number of alternatives for the healthy development of young children. Some thoughts which we would like to leave our readers with are: how can these programmes be made to reach the millions of children who at present do not have access to them? What forms of communication or dissemination programmes are required? What support and training services are needed? How can we change the attitudes of the people at all the various administrative levels to make administrators delegate some of the responsibility to local people, and to encourage local people to become more self-reliant?

We started this chapter with a grim review of the problems and needs of developing countries in terms of human development. We want to end with the idea that with national commitment, local leadership and involvement, and the wise use of resources and alternatives, these problems can be solved for the benefit of the children and, in the end, the country. The time to act is now.

> Many things can wait. The child cannot
> Right now his bones are being formed
> his blood is being made, his senses are
> being developed. To him we cannot say
> tomorow. His name is TODAY
>
> Gabriela Mistral

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## ADDRESSES

For further information about the programmes described in Section 2 please apply to the appropriate institutions as follows:

- The Non-Formal Pre-school Education Project,
  Dominican Republic
  Unicef
  United Nations Centre
  New York, N.Y.
  U.S.A.

- The Programme 'La Playa'
  Universidad del Norte or Bernard van Leer Foundation
  Kra. 58 No. 68-32
  A.A. 1569
  Barranquilla
  Colombia

- The Early Stimulation Programme
  CINDE
  A.A. 50262
  Medellin
  Colombia

- The Integrated Home-Centre Programme
  CINDE as above

- Programme PROMESA
  CINDE as above

- El Codito
  Universidad Pedagogica or Bernard van Leer Foundation
  Nacional Centro de Investigaciones
  A.A. 75144
  Bogota
  Colombia

- SERVOL
  SERVOL Ltd. or Bernard van Leer Foundation
  91, Frederick Street
  Port of Spain
  Trinidad
  West Indies

**Table 1** IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMMES

| TYPES OF PROGRAMME | OBJECTIVES |
|---|---|
| **Pre-schools,**<br>**Day-care Centres,**<br>**Neighbourhood Centres,**<br>**Co-operatives** | To provide a safe environment for children whilst their mothers attend to other needs.<br>To bring children together and to encourage interaction.<br>To meet some of the social and emotional needs of children.<br>To respond to the needs of the parents and the children without replacing the parent as the main actor in the child's development. |
| **Early Stimulation Programmes**<br>**Parent Child Programmes,**<br>**Child-to-Child Programmes,**<br>**Integrated Home Centre Programmes** | To attend to all the needs of children from the moment of birth.<br>To make the family the agent in the child's development.<br>To reduce the costs of programmes for young children by manipulating time, space, materials and educational agents to reach as many children as possible with the existing resources. |
| **Community Directed**<br>**Parent-Child Programmes**<br>**Comprehensive Programmes** | To indirectly attend to the needs of young children by motivating the community to form action groups to work on educational projects and to improve the physical environment of the community. |

| STRATEGIES | GROUP PROCESS |
| --- | --- |
| To provide a 'centre' (either a school, home or backyard) where children are physically safe.<br>To encourage the use of educational games and toys which stimulate the children's intellectual, creative and social abilities and indicate their limitations. These games should have some relevance to the local culture.<br>To provide a sideline programme for parents to educate them in ways to attend to the needs of their children out of school hours. | Children form very loose bonds of interaction and the value of the group lies mainly in the process of socialisation in which the children learn the norms and standards of their society, how to communicate with others, and how to enhance their creativity and self expression. Ideally the parents should be the leaders in such programmes taking responsibility for the running of the school and the group becomes the vehicle for decision making and action. |
| SHORT TERM:<br>To hold periodic meetings with groups of mothers or some other family to provide them with the skills and confidence to attend to the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of their children in the home. From every meeting the mother should come home with some specific activity.<br><br>LONG TERM<br>To encourage future community leaders who will take responsibility for organising new programmes. | Groups of adults provide a learning environment for encouraging discussion and reinforcing new ideas, generally leading to some individual action in their homes. Group work helps to give the mothers more confidence and to learn from others.<br>In the long term; ideally such groups will start discussing communal problems and form the basis for community action to improve the local environment. |
| To encourage the local community to improve their environment using a method based on maximum use of local human and material resources and on the cultural knowledge and experience of the people. In the short term this involves working with intermediate technology to improve the physical environment in which children live, while the long term objective is to enable people to sustain and improve that environment through the processes of education and organisation. | The group process is crucial in community-based programmes.<br>People must work together to change the environment and then to maintain these changes. At the beginning there is little interaction among members, just enough to carry out actions. But with time the groups develop into more formal, lasting organisations which encourage a process of problem solving as a result of discussion and reflection, leading to sustained collective action. |

| EDUCATIONAL AGENTS | WHO IS TRAINED |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher or para-professional is the main educational agent. This person should be either a member of the community or an outsider who is well immersed in local activities. In addition, the parents and other children serve as important educational agents, stimulating the child's development through the process of interaction. | In pre-school and day care programmes the teacher, the parents and children receive some form of training.<br>In the case of neighbourhood centres and co-operatives community members or mothers take the role of the teacher and frequently their training comes from community action leaders who go from house to house or centre to centre providing help. |
| A member of the family becomes the main educational agent, although indirectly it is the group and the group leader who play major roles in encouraging and directing the mothers. | In most cases it is the mothers who are trained to attend to their children's needs, although in the child-to-child programmes it is the older brothers and sisters who learn to take responsibility for the younger children. Early Stimulation programmes may use para-professionals or members of the community to go from house to house weighing the children and looking for symptoms of illness. Integrated Home Centre programmes may involve also the use of a trained nursery school teacher. |
| The community participants are the main educational agents, learning together through discussion with community leaders and their external change agent, and through a process of trial and error.<br><br>The community leaders perform a vital role in the educational process as most of the learning and discussion take place in groups, and their role is to guide and control the group discussions. | Initially the community leaders are trained since they take responsibility for the group's actions. But eventually the learning process is one in which the whole community becomes involved rather than one which focuses principally on the child. |

| TIME | PHYSICAL FACILITIES |
| --- | --- |
| Children should attend the centres for only as long as is required by the family: only in the case of mothers who work full-time should there be a need for children to stay all day.<br><br>The hours may be flexible particularly in the case of neighbourhood centres and different mothers may take responsibility for different days of the week, or for mornings or afternoons. | The centre to accommodate the children need not be an expensive building, but instead may be a local community centre, someone's home, a restored shed or even a backyard. Games and toys can be made cheaply using local materials. Ideally in the case of daycare centres and pre-schools there should be some facilities for cooking. |
| With family-based programmes the time involved can be very flexible. A member of the family need attend a meeting for only one hour each week and then play with their child for half an hour per day. Meetings should be held at a time which encourages maximum attendance and, where possible, allows working mothers to attend. | Most of the work is carried out within the child's home. The only requirement is a place for adults to meet and this may be a community centre or someone's home. In the case of the Integrated Home Centre programmes children come to the centre only two days a week, so the centre can be used to accommodate a greater number. |
| Community based programmes can be very flexible and the time of meetings or action should be determined by the local people according to their cultural frame of reference. Even within the community this may vary from group to group: for example groups of workers may be available only at night, whilst groups of mothers may prefer to have their meetings in the afternoons or mornings. | The main part of the work in these programmes is carried out within the community, but the group meetings can be held in local community centres or even out in the open. What is important is that the community feels that the meeting place belongs to them and not to some outside financing agency. |

## THE FOUNDATION
(continued from inside front cover)

### CRITERIA FOR SUPPORT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- Funds can be made available for projects organised and implemented by public authorities, academic and non-governmental, voluntary institutions.

- Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals.

- The Foundation recognises that projects in its field of work require time to develop and implement new approaches. Grants are normally made in cycles of three years. The long-term sustainability of a project is an important consideration in the appraisal of proposals.

- The Foundation does not prescribe a rigid formula for proposals. Potential applicants are advised to submit an outline before preparing a detailed document.

- Decisions regarding the funding of major projects are the responsibility of the Foundation's Board of Trustees. No commitment can be given prior to approval of a project by Trustees.

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